



# SEAPORT

NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO: CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS, & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Seaport's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in September remained at the August rate of 4.4 percent as shown in Seaport Table 1. In September 2003, the rate was 4.9 percent. Month-over-month, total employment decreased, but the number of unemployed persons decreased at the same rate, thus the unemployment rate remained the same. The decrease was expected, as September is usually a break between hiring seasons for recreation and agriculture, and the winter hiring season for the holidays. In September, Seaport's *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* increased by 60 from August 2004, but decreased 760 from September 2003. September's increase month-over-month was due to normal seasonal fluctuation in *Government Education*. *Education* increases in September because of the return of school staffs to classrooms after the summer break. Unfortunately, the trend of job decreases in year-over-year data continued in September. *Food Processing*, *Professional & Business Services*, and *Government Administration* all have lost jobs from last year.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: College cost increases moderate, but private loans rising sharply

The pace of ever-rising college costs across the country has slowed somewhat this year, and students are relying more on private loans rather than grants or other federal sources to finance their education, according to two new studies. This year, the average tuition for in-state students at public, four-year colleges rose 10.5 percent to \$5,132, according to twin studies released in October by the College Board. The surveys also found students are turning increasingly to private loans to pay for school, borrowing \$11.3 billion last year from non-federal sources, mostly private lenders. That figure has risen 147 percent in three years - and it

Seaport Table 1: Labor Force & Employment  
Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

|  | Sep<br>2004* | Aug<br>2004 | Sep<br>2003 | % Change From |              |
|--|--------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
|  |              |             |             | Last<br>Month | Last<br>Year |
| <b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b> |              |             |             |               |              |
| <b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>               |              |             |             |               |              |
| Civilian Labor Force                     | 35,560       | 36,140      | 35,770      | -1.6          | -0.6         |
| Unemployment                             | 1,570        | 1,600       | 1,740       | -1.9          | -9.8         |
| % of Labor Force Unemployed              | 4.4          | 4.4         | 4.9         |               |              |
| Total Employment                         | 33,990       | 34,540      | 34,030      | -1.6          | -0.1         |
| <b>Unadjusted</b>                        |              |             |             |               |              |
| Civilian Labor Force                     | 35,000       | 35,760      | 35,200      | -2.1          | -0.6         |
| Unemployment                             | 1,180        | 1,350       | 1,320       | -12.6         | -10.6        |
| % of Labor Force Unemployed              | 3.4          | 3.8         | 3.8         |               |              |
| Total Employment                         | 33,820       | 34,410      | 33,880      | -1.7          | -0.2         |
| <b>JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK</b>             |              |             |             |               |              |
| <b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS</b>    | 26,160       | 26,100      | 26,920      | 0.2           | -2.8         |
| <b>Goods-Producing Industries</b>        | 4,690        | 4,590       | 4,720       | 2.2           | -0.6         |
| Natural Resources & Mining               | 220          | 220         | 270         | 0.0           | -18.5        |
| Construction                             | 1,290        | 1,310       | 1,360       | -1.5          | -5.1         |
| Manufacturing                            | 3,180        | 3,060       | 3,090       | 3.9           | 2.9          |
| Wood Product Manufacturing               | 590          | 570         | 530         | 3.5           | 11.3         |
| Food Manufacturing                       | 70           | 70          | 130         | 0.0           | -46.2        |
| Paper Manufacturing                      | 1,190        | 1,190       | 1,160       | 0.0           | 2.6          |
| Other Manufacturing                      | 1,330        | 1,230       | 1,270       | 8.1           | 4.7          |
| <b>Service-Providing Industries</b>      | 21,470       | 21,510      | 22,200      | -0.2          | -3.3         |
| Trade, Transportation & Utilities        | 5,440        | 5,480       | 5,550       | -0.7          | -2.0         |
| Wholesale Trade                          | 650          | 640         | 640         | 1.6           | 1.6          |
| Retail Trade                             | 3,530        | 3,590       | 3,620       | -1.7          | -2.5         |
| Utilities                                | 90           | 90          | 90          | 0.0           | 0.0          |
| Transportation & Warehousing             | 1,170        | 1,160       | 1,200       | 0.9           | -2.5         |
| Information                              | 370          | 380         | 390         | -2.6          | -5.1         |
| Financial Activities                     | 1,870        | 1,880       | 1,810       | -0.5          | 3.3          |
| Professional & Business Services         | 1,320        | 1,330       | 1,490       | -0.8          | -11.4        |
| Education & Health Services              | 3,960        | 3,980       | 4,040       | -0.5          | -2.0         |
| Leisure & Hospitality                    | 2,500        | 2,500       | 2,650       | 0.0           | -5.7         |
| Other Services                           | 1,080        | 1,080       | 1,110       | 0.0           | -2.7         |
| Government Education                     | 2,260        | 2,190       | 2,310       | 3.2           | -2.2         |
| Government Administration                | 1,860        | 1,880       | 2,030       | -1.1          | -8.4         |
| Government Tribes                        | 810          | 810         | 820         | 0.0           | -1.2         |

\*Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

doesn't include credit card debt, which as many as one-quarter of college students may be relying on to finance their education. David Ward, president of the American Council on Education, which represents public and private schools, said political pressure, cost cutting and improving state budgets have helped moderate tuition increases. But he said a fundamental issue remains: colleges are getting more of their support from students and less of it from taxpayers. Another interesting tidbit in the study's finding is that this year is the third

straight year in which private colleges and universities have raised tuition by a lower percentage than public ones.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Clearwater County

- Anyone following in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark across North Central Idaho will see untamed land, much the same as the explorers saw it 200 years ago when they made their way along the high ridgeline route. Today, the route remains primitive, and travelers are a long way from services. But if they need help there is now radio communication because of a new building and an updated relay on Junction Mountain near Orofino. The new building is integral to the effort to bolster radio communications in five Idaho and three Montana counties, in preparation for an anticipated influx of visitors during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial years of 2005 and 2006. The building overlooks the North Fork Clearwater River drainage and is a good spot for bouncing radio signals from one mountaintop to another. Several agencies, including the counties, law enforcement, and the U.S. Forest Service, were involved in developing the site and constructing the building. "I'm glad we could work together to get the radio equipment set up in the new building," said Doug Gober, North Fork District Ranger. "We rely on the radios and each other to get help when there's an emergency or just to keep each other informed about hazards or safety problems."

### Idaho & Lewis Counties

- Farmers in Idaho and Lewis Counties are intrigued by the idea of making more money from their wheat crops by forming a co-op to build and run an ethanol plant. The proposed \$23 million plant would not only make ethanol, but could produce feed pellets and carbon dioxide as byproducts that could also be sold. The idea has gained momentum and a steering committee has been formed that includes four area farmers, a local businessman, and the local economic development specialist to help with a feasibility study. According to the new committee, the plant may bring more than \$20 million to the Camas Prairie during construction and that much again during each year of production. The proposed plant would produce 10 million gallons of ethanol per year and be supplied by wheat from Idaho, Lewis, and Nez Perce Counties. According to the committee, California will be 1 billion gallons short on ethanol by next summer. The state uses ethanol as a gasoline oxygenate additive; most of the gasoline

sold in California presently contains 5.7 percent ethanol.

### Latah County

- Wal-Mart has filed application papers with Moscow's sister city, Pullman, Washington, to build a Wal-Mart Supercenter on a 28-acre site on the south side of Bishop Boulevard. Part of the application includes plans to lengthen Fairmount Drive, which runs to the Community Action Center behind the old Safeway location, and extend the street to the rear of the proposed 223,000-square foot store. The store will have a large parking lot in front, facing Bishop Boulevard, with a smaller parking west. The superstore will employ 300 full-time and 100 part-time employees. Wal-Mart already has two discount stores that opened in 1993 in North Central Idaho and southeastern Washington, which do not sell groceries—one in Lewiston at 116,000-square feet, and one in Moscow at 93,000-square feet. The Supercenters all include a grocery department.

### Nez Perce & Asotin (WA) Counties

- Potlatch Corp. announced plans in September to use cash from the recent sale of three Minnesota mills to reduce its debt while increasing pension investments and shareholder value. The September 21 sale of three strand board mills gave the company \$455 million in cash. That, combined with \$200 million from the last two years' operational earnings, gave Potlatch more than enough to cover its debt, according to corporate spokesman Michael D. Sullivan in Spokane. The company owes about \$600 million under various debt categories, Sullivan said. He explained that facing debt is typical for running any kind of business. But now Potlatch is gaining the upper hand. "We have been reducing our debt steadily over the last two years," Sullivan said. "We are operating very profitably." The company is putting \$58 million (or \$35 million after taxes) toward pension investments. This is the highest amount Potlatch is allowed for such a payment in 2004, according to Sullivan. He said this decision is "something that should be heartening to all employees." The pension fund suffered during the last two years because of general stock market sag.

---

Doug Tweedy, Regional Labor Economist  
1158 Idaho Street, Lewiston, ID 83501  
(208) 799-5000 ext. 3511  
E-mail: dtweedy@cl.idaho.gov